

# Citizenship education and American nationalism

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## Abstract

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Scholars typically think of the United States as an example of civic nationalism, a relatively inclusive nation that is held together by a shared commitment to the civic principles of freedom, equality and toleration. I argue to the contrary, that the American nation is a culturally particular nation whose citizens must conform to more than belief in those principles. To make this case, I examine the process by which non-Americans are assimilated and educated for citizenship, reviewing citizenship education materials—manuals, handbooks and textbooks—from three periods of particularly intense nationalism from the early twentieth century to today. Through this review, I show that citizenship in the United States has historically meant assuming a much more comprehensive identity than the one a civic nationalist account of the American nation might suggest.

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## **Chapter 1: Nationalism, American nationalism, and citizenship**

Despite the growth of cosmopolitan global citizenship, today's world must still contend with the forces of nationalism. National communities continue to define the extent of their boundaries, debating how inclusive or exclusive these boundaries should be. In the United States, this debate typically manifests itself in discussions of citizenship, specifically of how and under what conditions immigrants can become American citizens. Not all nations, however, assume such a close relationship between citizenship and nationality. Indeed, scholars generally distinguish between two types of nations: civic and ethnic.

Hans Kohn first formulated this distinction between “civic” and “ethnic” nations in *The Idea of Nationalism* (1944). Civic nations are those which organize around anonymous, universal principles like liberty and tolerance; ethnic nations, by contrast, owe their cohesion to historical myths about a particular ethnocultural group and to a shared membership in that group. Civic or liberal nationalism emerged first in England, France, and the United States, being “born in a common effort, in a fight for political rights, for individual liberty and tolerance, ...inalienable rights of every man, universal as a hope and message for the whole of mankind” (20). Ethnic nationalism, by contrast, arose across central and eastern Europe in the century after 1848, as a release of the “collective passions,” becoming what Kohn called “the most potent factor in arousing hatred and fomenting wars” (Kohn 1955, 46).

Kohn recognized that this dichotomy was a simplification that more accurately described nations in the abstract than those in actual existence. This disclaimer has not,

however, prevented the civic/ethnic distinction from defining the concept of nations and nationalism in both the popular and scholarly imagination. Michael Ignatieff relies on this framework in his book *Blood and Belonging* (1994), a study of nationalism in the late twentieth century, in which he analyzes the forces of “ethnic nationalism” as the new locus of conflict in the post-Cold War world. Liah Greenfeld’s treatment of the phenomenon in *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (1992) also follows Kohn’s framework; in her book, a study of the development of nationalism in England, the United States, France, Germany, and Russia, the civic nationalism of the United States is an inclusive, more democratic nationalism than the “ethnic nationalisms” that order other states, Germany in particular. David Hollinger’s *Postethnic America* (1995, 2000) attempts to work through the problems that the United States faces as an ethnically diverse civic nation. On Hollinger’s view, the American political community is both distinctly “American” and able to contain a multiplicity of cultures. Were it an ethnic nation, this sort of pluralism would not be possible.

The idea of civic nationalism has not been without its detractors. Indeed, the very coherence of the concept has been questioned. Will Kymlicka (1995), for example, asserts that every nation organizes around some kind of ethnic core. In most cases, public discourse is conducted through a single language and a single culture. Yael Tamir’s (1995) defense of a liberal form of nationalism also recognizes that a civic nationality will always collide with the fact that “those who create the political system, legislate its laws, occupy key political positions, and run the state bureaucracy have a culture that they cannot avoid bringing into the political domain” (149). Bernard Yack argues that the modern conception of popular sovereignty relies upon a conception of “the people” who authorize the nation-state, a



“people” who in the end are a far less voluntaristic group than civic nationalism assumes. To Yack, civic nationalists “[have] merely replaced old myths about nationalism with new ones” (Yack 2001, 530; see also Yack 1996).

The civic/ethnic framework persists, however, in part because it is embedded in orthodox interpretation of the liberal-democratic character of American political culture. In his *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville analyzed how the essentially middle class origins of Anglo-American politics and nationality contribute to explanations of diverse American phenomena, from the absence of a sustained socialist movement to Americans’ belief that they are a classless society. But Tocqueville’s overarching narrative of a burgeoning liberal democracy failed to capture the very illiberal reality that defined the experience of Native Americans, African-Americans, women, and other racial and sexual minorities even in his own time. Tocqueville describes Americans as united by shared belief in political ideas, as opposed to shared ethnic origins or cultural symbols: “They believe that at birth each person has received the capacity for self-government” Tocqueville writes. Moreover, “they all consider society as a body making progress” (2003, 439).

America’s status as a civic nation remains an undisturbed orthodoxy. American civic nationalism—the concept of a national community united not by a shared ethnicity, but by shared commitment to political principles (in the American case, liberal democratic values)—guides Hans Kohn’s (1957) interpretation of American nationalism. It also provides the framework for Seymour Martin Lipset’s (1963) analysis of America’s unique status as “the first new nation.” Lipset contends that one of the defining features of the American nation is its essential adherence to liberal principles, and its particular emphasis on the value of equality. Wilbur Zelinsky’s (1988) study of American nationalism also carries

on this orthodoxy. Zelinsky analyzes the symbolic representations—monuments, memorials, and markers—of American nationalism, and suggests that since at least the mid-nineteenth century, the symbols have been largely political rather than cultural. The civic nation orthodoxy also underwrites the hopeful pluralism and cosmopolitanism of Michael Walzer (1992), whose essay “What it Means to be an American” attempts to define the character of the American nation, ultimately concluding that it is an essentially liberal, pluralist identity free from ethnic or religious barriers to membership or identification.

The more comprehensive view of American identity that I want to suggest, however, reveals evidence that unsettles this orthodoxy. Membership in the American nation does depend in large measure on civic attributes: feeling at home in “symbols and ceremonies [that] are culturally anonymous, invented rather than inherited, voluntaristic in style, narrowly political in content: the flag, the Pledge, the Fourth, the Constitution” (Walzer 1992, 35). But full membership, I argue, also depends on cultural characteristics such as obedient work habits, traditional visions of family life, and conventional conceptions of gender relations. It is true that ethnicity is not a requirement or a permanently impermeable barrier to national membership; but it is equally true that the nation is not united by or rooted in exclusively procedural or “narrowly political” civic symbols. This study contends that the American nation actually occupies a space obscured by the civic/ethnic dichotomy. It is neither purely civic nor ethnic; it is instead a nation that is united by a specific shared culture, not by adherence to the culturally anonymous liberal principles.

In a world still politically defined by nation-states, one cannot help discussing citizenship when discussing nationality. In some nations, boundaries of citizenship are coterminous with the boundaries of the nation, and sometimes the nation is a special subset

of the citizenry. In ethnic nations with more inclusive citizenship requirements, one can be a citizen without being a member of the nation. But in civic nation-states such as the United States, the nation and the citizenry should describe the same group. Analyses of American citizenship, then, can also shed light on the character of nationality.

Rogers Smith's history of American citizenship, *Civic Ideals* (1997), breaks significant ground and interrupts the standard Tocquevillian thesis. Smith suggests that American political development is not just peripherally sidetracked by moments of illiberal, ascriptive ideologies on its progressive march to realization of liberal democracy; rather, this story of America "fails to give due weight to inegalitarian legal provisions that have shaped the participants and the substance of American politics throughout history" (15). Indeed, his examination of citizenship laws illustrates the difficulty in attempting to posit a single defining ideology to the American story. Strong currents of liberalism and republicanism mix with inegalitarian, illiberal, exclusionary ideologies as American political actors do the work of politics. For example, Smith highlights the persistence of "doctrines of 'natural' immutable political status that fit poorly with their liberal republican" notions of consensual membership (101). These doctrines, enshrined in citizenship laws, often prevented Native Americans, Black Americans, women, and in the early republic, British loyalists from enjoying full citizenship status.

Smith's analysis is powerful and well-researched, but does not confront the embedded reliance on an essentially civic, as opposed to ethnic, American nationalism. Throughout, Smith provides a comprehensive background to the conditions under which new citizenship laws arose or were revised. The emphasis, however, remains on the legal definitions of citizenship as the definitions of membership. As he writes "[citizenship laws] create the

most recognized political identity of the individuals they embrace” (31). They also “form a more useful map than may first appear” because they are created by “elites acting in relation to particular pressures—sometimes violent, sometimes economic, sometimes political and ideological—exerted by a wide range of constituent and rival groups inside and outside the country” (35). Citizenship laws may be more directly representative of dominant civic myths—a term Smith uses to describe “why persons form a people, usually indicating how a political community originated, who is eligible for membership, who is not and why, and what the community’s values and aims are”—but they are hardly the only sites in which civic myths are formed and reformed (33). And the broad base of contestation over citizenship laws does not necessarily give laws a separate, more dominant role in civic myth formation, as opposed to other functions of the government, such as practices of citizenship education and processes of naturalization.

In his *Stories of Peoplehood* (2003), Smith expands this idea of civic myths, offering a new way to think about nationalism. Here, Smith argues that nationalism is the process of defining “the people,” a process conducted by telling stories. A national people are created by what Smith calls “ethically constitutive stories” which have “special capacities to inspire senses of [the] normative worth” of a nation (59). Ethically constitutive stories need not be either purely civic or ethnic. In fact, as Smith notes, these stories are “more likely to be religious or quasi-religious, kinship-like, and gendered” than other stories of peoplehood, such as economic or political power stories (69). Because these ethically constitutive stories go beyond simply talking about political procedure, many scholars might term them “ethnic.” But ethically constitutive stories need not be explicitly ethnic; in fact, many ethically constitutive stories are about a shared linguistic, historical, cultural, or religious identity. The

tendency of scholars to classify these facets of identity as criteria of “ethnic” nationalism simply because they do not fit the narrow definition of the civic nation is why, according to Smith, “it seems advisable to eschew categorizing existing political communities as fundamentally ‘civic’ or ‘ethnic.’” Instead, he suggests, we should “adopt alternative frameworks that can provide a place for all the dimensions of peoplehood” (92).

One of the enduring stories of American peoplehood is that America is a nation composed of all other nations, infinitely welcoming to immigrants. Thus, the immigrant experience with citizenship—the process through which immigrants become citizens—offers even more leverage than legal definitions of citizenship to explore the accuracy of the civic nation orthodoxy. In his *True Faith and Allegiance* (2005), Noah Pickus examines immigration and naturalization policy as it expresses American civic nationalism. He takes care to examine processes of naturalization and immigration—citizenship waiting periods, language exam requirements, civic education requirements—which contribute to a more robust understanding of the civic principles of American nationalism. Nevertheless, Pickus is limited by his emphasis on the procedural rather than the substantive dimension of processes like language exams and civic education. Pickus’s analysis is also wedded to a defense of American civic nationalism, a doctrine which emphasizes procedural definitions of the nation.

An analysis of the details of the materials presented to immigrants as part of a citizen’s civic education reveals more about American nationality than does an examination of the steps citizens must take to acquire citizenship. The contexts in which immigrants learn the English required for the citizenship exam is just as important as the fact that this language requirement exists. Moreover, governmental processes of citizenship education and

naturalization are not the only processes at work. The civic education carried out by an assortment of civic organizations identified as so active and prevalent from Tocqueville's writing forward are also active processes of constructing citizens. Full citizenship in the eyes of the law does not guarantee full citizenship in the eyes of other citizens. The following analysis looks at the substantive content of citizenship education processes. In order to capture this content, I examine citizenship education materials—the manuals, handbooks, and textbooks—from three periods of particularly intense nationalism; these periods are unique moments of national self-definition, making them especially illustrative examples of national character.

I first examine texts from the Americanization movement of the late Progressive era, in the immediate aftermath of World War I. Next, I analyze texts from the post-World War II period, from approximately 1945 to 1960. I conclude with a reading of citizenship education materials for immigrants after the events of September 11, 2001. These readings will illustrate some of the different conceptions of citizenship presupposed during each period under examination. They will also suggest the threads of continuity between these periods. The processes by which non-Americans are assimilated, and the sorts of identities these sources define demonstrates that citizenship in the United States has historically implied a much more comprehensive identity than the one a civic nationalist account of the American nation might suggest.

## **Chapter 2: Citizenship and the American Nation after World War I**

The sweeping changes brought into political life by the Progressive activists and intellectuals had consequences that reverberated beyond the institutional reforms they helped initiate. Progressives also changed the content of citizenship education and the meaning of citizenship itself. As described by John Higham in his *Strangers in the Land* (1988), some early attempts at citizenship education by reformers were motivated both by the desire to better conditions for immigrants, and against a backdrop of a general fear that ethnic immigrants would undermine “America’s free, self-reliant, orderly culture, the unique economic well-being of its working people and the prestige of its industrial pursuits” (41). Immigrants and immigration were concerns of prohibitionists, government reforms, and other middle class crusaders. Despite the emergent nativism that colors the late nineteenth century—a feeling that was becoming increasingly institutionalized through immigration quotas and citizenship restrictions (Smith 1997, 346-409; Higham 1988, 35-105; Pickus 2005, 64-106; King 2000, 86-126)—early Americanization attempts were not simply racist, xenophobic, or nationalist.

Jane Addams, for example, shows an abiding concern for the well-being of immigrant families in *Twenty Years at Hull-House* (1910). Addams’s vision of assimilation or Americanization was one that “should build a bridge between European and American experiences in such wise as to give them both more meaning and a sense of relation” (137). Addams’s educational bridge primarily brought European immigrants into relation with

America via work habits and ideas of labor. Addams despised the immigrant men's drinking; almost equally odious were those second generation immigrants who tried to avoid working: the "little groups of dissipated young men who pride themselves upon their ability to live without working, and who despise all the honest and sober ways of their immigrant parents" (145). One of Addams's greatest innovations was the Labor Museum, which preserved and displayed traditional domestic labor practices and apparatus from the Europeans' countries of origin. The women in Addams's Chicago neighborhood found in the Labor Museum the ability "to instruct their American hostesses in an old and honored craft" (140). The Labor Museum, Addams writes, was also in part a response to the fact that "culture is an understanding of the long-established occupations and thoughts of men" (140). The museum transforms the previously inferior women's work into household arts, which are equally valuable as any other form of "culture."

What begins with Addams and other Progressives as a well-meaning attempt to help primarily peasant immigrants adapt to a recently industrialized urban American geography would take a nativist turn which civic education would come to reflect. Addams's settlement houses certainly encouraged a certain set of values that are manifested prominently in the manuals and handbooks from the post-World War I period: thrift, temperance, moderation, and cleanliness. But in the texts and processes geared specifically toward preparing immigrants for the American workplace, the importance of obedience and allegiance are featured as even more prominent elements of Americanization.

As immigration increased in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, both employers and native-born employees began to see immigrants as a major threat. Gwendolyn Mink reports that between 1880 and 1920, 23.5 million immigrants entered the



United States. Nearly 70 percent of these immigrants were men between the ages of fifteen and 40, ripe for the workforce. Most immigrant men ended up working in the factories of American cities (Mink 1986, 51, 52). This influx of immigrant labor stoked the nativist fire among labor unions. Mink suggests that the new immigrants “roused trade unions against new workers because demographic changes coincided with technological, political and economic setbacks” to the unions (49). Labor leaders saw immigrant labor as one more obstacle to the already difficult task of workplace organization. In the early 1890s, labor papers argued that “the supply of labor has far outstripped the demand, immigrants add to the crowds of unemployed in the cities, capitalists exploit the situation by hiring workers, and there is no escape to the West” (Higham 1988, 71). Not only did the immigrants represent a threat to labor, business leaders in the Gilded Age also saw immigrant labor as threatening. “Businessmen,” writes Higham, “fretted about [immigration’s] consequences for social stability” (1988, 50). Strikes and pressure from organized labor were cast as the result of foreign influence.

### **A. Creating citizens**

At the turn of the twentieth century, formal “Americanization” activities began. This movement expressed itself on a variety of institutional fronts, in “school boards, the workplace, settlement houses, state and federal agencies, unions, voluntary and patriotic organizations.” According to Pickus, Americanization was simply a continuation of the Progressive movement (2005, 71). On Pickus’s account, the Progressives “were heirs to the Founders’ belief that certain kinds of citizens were necessary to make free government work” (72). But Progressive reformers also championed changes in the style of free government

itself. Political scientist Stephen Skowronek describes these changes in his book *Building a New American State* (1982) as “the expansion of national administrative controls” (4). The new American state was constructed as a result of efforts to “institutionalize a whole new range of governing capacities” (8). In other words, the national government began to assert more powers, and its functions were systematized, organized, and bureaucratized.

Yet building the new American state also had consequences for American national identity as well, since Progressivism also was a nationalist project for maintaining and policing the boundaries of who was—and was not—an American. Horace Kallen, writing in 1924, noted the great cultural break that the First World War created. He writes in *Culture and Democracy in the United States* (Kallen and Whitfield 1998), that “the Great War with tanks and planes and poison gas has been followed by a battle of values of norms and standards; a struggle of theories of life” (5). Before World War I “the confrontation of common welfare with private ownership grew to be, and remains, the major constitutional issues in the law of the land” (14). But the War changed the emphasis of politics. “What this war did,” according to Kallen, “was to turn the anxieties about property into one about people. It now became people, qualities of race, heritage and attitude, not law, which was the menace” (15).

As Kallen suggests, the identity-forming Americanization project is not wholly separate from the Progressive reformism. Rather, Americanization was a product of Progressive ideas of democratic reform, applied to personal identities instead of the public welfare. The Americanizers who beat the drums of nationalism were of a piece with the seemingly benign reformers. Writing in 1916, Edward Steiner, an Austrian immigrant, professor at Grinnell College, traveling lecturer and an Americanizer mixes both the

temperance of Jane Addams—“the greatest enemy of the immigrant is the saloon; and if he could not obtain liquor, it would prove one of the greatest blessings of to him and to the community in which he lives” (Talbot and Johnsen 1920, 96)—and the nationalism of the wartime period—“we the ‘hyphenated Americans’ will stay because we need this country, because humanity needs it and its institutions” (98).

Steiner’s speech found inclusion in a handbook of Americanization, compiled by physician and avid Americanizer Winthrop Talbot, whose diverse documents “should be known to all of us, native-born and new citizen alike” (Talbot 1920, v). Talbot’s *Americanization* “constitutes a reference book of unique value to everyone who believes in America as a world force for civilization and democracy as opposed to exploitation and autocracy” (v). But Talbot also makes clear that this book is for people working in the field of Americanization. The handbook contains an extensive bibliography of contemporary popular and scholarly articles related to the practices and techniques of Americanization. Talbot writes, introducing the bibliography, “sometimes workers in the same field have had neither time nor opportunity to become sufficiently acquainted with each other” or “are lacking awareness of the accomplishments of others along lines which are parallel or closely related to our own” (xi). This prefatory note suggests that the audience for this text, and the works and excerpts it contains, are Americanizers who are working either as part of public or private citizenship education organizations. It provides, as such, an understanding of the assumptions and premises on which the education of immigrants in this period are based.

This collection of articles, speeches, and essays is divided into three sections: “Principles of Americanism,” “Essentials of Americanization,” and “Technic of Race-Assimilation.” The first section consists of documents that explain the idea of Americanism,

what Talbot describes in an explanatory note as “those ideals and principles which inform American life” (v). In the opening essay of this section Talbot describes Americanism along the lines of essentially liberal citizenship. Americanism means

that mankind is endowed with unalienable rights of humankind which no laws may abrogate or nullify; that among unalienable rights of humankind are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that government shall be government of laws, not men, that laws shall be enacted through representatives elected by general suffrage; that the welfare of all shall be paramount to the privileges of the individual; that the will of the majority shall prevail only when not imperiling basic rights of humanity; and finally that enjoyment of American privileges implies corresponding obligations in personal contribution of service by each for all, in upholding the law, and in orderly administration or repeal of measures enacted by representatives (1).

What follow are a variety of documents and excerpts from American history, such as the Mayflower Compact, the Declaration of Independence, speeches by Charles Sumner, Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt.

According to Talbot, “Americanism” describes principles and ideas, and “Americanization is the process of sharing in and promoting” those ideals (73). To make the case, his handbook features speeches and essays by a variety of American intellectuals, politicians, and reformers of all stripes and races, including works by thinkers as diverse as W.E.B. DuBois, Booker T. Washington, Walt Whitman, and the prominent economist Jeremiah Jenks. The documents that follow Talbot’s short introduction to this section of the

handbook describe the possibilities of Americanizing various races, including the Japanese, the Indian, the Mountaineer, and the Negro. All of the essays tout the benefits of assimilation to the immigrants. But many essays are concerned with the Americanism and assimilation of non-white Americans. It is not race that makes one American, but rather one's beliefs.

The works in the "Essentials of Americanization" section of Talbot's handbook elaborate on the importance of Americanization for the American nation. In an essay titled "American Ideals and Race Mixture," Percy Stickney Grant, rector of the Church of the Ascension in New York City, asserts that "our question, then, as to the effect of race mixture is not the rather supercilious one: what are we admitting into America that may possibly injure American ideals? but, what are the old American races doing to perpetuate these ideals" (91)? Grant suggests that it is the new immigrants who actually live up to the American ideals. He writes that if the American ideals are "public schools, the ballot, freedom," then "the conservators and believers in American ideals seem to be our immigrants" (90). Americans abandon public schools if they can afford private ones, he writes, and "they too often leave town on Election Day; as for freedom, competent observers believe it is disappearing" (90). The problem of achieving the new Americanism was, for Grant, "the greatest in our history" akin to the colonial Revolution and the Federal Constitution (91). The imperative of full "racial amalgamation is the heroic problem of the present, with all it implies in purification and revision of old social, religious and political ideals" (92). With the United States' entrance into World War I, the push for national unity became even more imperative and coercive. This period is marked by the emergence of "100

percent Americanism,” a phrase that connotes, according to Higham, “universal conformity organized through total national unity” (1988, 205).

Nevertheless, these themes of citizenship are only hinted at here, and are often emphasized equally with liberal conceptions of citizenship. Talbot includes President Wilson’s 1915 address “The Meaning of Citizenship,” which Higham considers to be “one of the his noblest affirmations of the cosmopolitan sources of American nationality” (1988, 243). Wilson’s speech to the newly naturalized citizens claims that immigrants “have taken an oath of allegiance to a great ideal, a great body of principles, to a great hope of the human race” (Talbot 78). The actual processes of Americanization—the types of education that immigrants should receive, the specific ways in which the American social heritage ought to be transmitted, and the methods of assimilation—are not described in this section in detail. In the next section of Talbot’s handbook, the type of citizenship Americanization presupposes becomes clearer.

The methods of Americanization are described in the section entitled “Technic of Race-Assimilation.” The many essays here (indeed, this section comprises half of the book) describe the different forces of Americanization and their specific techniques. Not surprisingly, the primary techniques are the public schools. But the public schools function beyond their normal role of educating American youth. George Creel, chairman of the Committee on Public Information, a World War I era propaganda organization established by Woodrow Wilson, begins this section by suggesting that “the schools, which represent the largest single investment of the people’s money, are in use a scant seven hours a day for an average of one hundred and forty-four days a year” and are as such the perfect site for all manner of immigrant education and outreach. Creel wants to place “the industrial court, the

medical inspection bureau, the dental clinic, the milk station, the visiting nurses, the infant dispensary, the free-legal-aid bureau, the health office, and the juvenile court” all in what he calls earlier the neighborhood “school plant” (171). Not content to use the school as the bureaucratic center of immigrant life, Creel also suggests putting the schools to use at night: “night use of the school buildings strikes at the very heart of the leisure-time problem. In cities thousands of little children play in the streets, menaced alike by evil environment and the police court” (172). Many of the problems of these hyphenated Americans can be solved by “the adoption of a federal policy that will give unity, purpose and dynamic direction” to movements to open school buildings to public activities beyond education (173).

Yet public facilities are not the primary locus for Americanization. In an essay on Japanese assimilation, American missionary Sidney Gulick describes the importance of a proper domestic environment for full Americanization: “the point to be clearly remembered is that the degree of social assimilation that actually takes place depends entirely on the social conditions of the home and environment” (Talbot, 159). Gulick, like other Americanizers featured in Talbot’s handbook, does not subscribe to a biological theory of race, and rejects “those who deny the assimilability of the Japanese” because they “cannot conceive of the real assimilation by one people of members of another race except by intermarriage and actual interchange of biological heredity” (161). Americanization, according to Gulick, happens when educators and parents “give [immigrant children] the American social inheritance and the English language” (162). The “American social inheritance” goes undefined in his text, but there are hints that it consists of the values which begin an assimilative process that “takes place in the realm of the soul and not of the blood” (160). Creating citizens, then, is something akin to a religious conversion. As political

scientist Eldon Eisenach writes, “it was often difficult to distinguish a Progressive theological textbook from a sociological one” (Eisenach 2006, xv).

## **B. Building character**

An Americanization manual by Emory Bogardus, a pioneering American sociologist, shares the view that Americanization is a process of building character. Bogardus’s *Americanization* (1923) is an academic textbook describing the whole Americanization movement’s bases, scope, and methods. Bogardus clearly aims his text, like Talbot, at the people who will be conducting Americanization work. In a prefatory note, he writes to the “large numbers of persons and organizations which have been ready to do Americanization work but...have not known how to go about the task or just what to do” (10). The book, then, is clearly not simply a detached social scientific study of the movement; Americanization is, to Bogardus, the “process of building as perfect a society as it is possible to do on earth” (13). The sentence clearly suggests, on the first page, the Protestant themes that Bogardus’s textbook and handbook on Americanization emphasizes. Whereas Talbot’s handbook, with its variety of authors and themes, did not represent a single, unified vision of Americanization, Bogardus has a much more focused idea of Americanization as character education.

From the outset, Bogardus makes it clear that Americanization is more than simply encouraging liberal citizenship. Americanization is “a process which transforms unlike attitudes and behavior into like attitudes and behavior” (15). These attitudes and behaviors, if adopted by all, will result in “not only a government of the people, by the people, and for the people, but far more, namely, education, industry, wealth, recreation, religion of the



people, by the people, and for the people” (15). For Bogardus, American nationality apparently consists of more than just shared civic principles, but shared religion, and a comprehensive shared life.

Racial and cultural differences, Bogardus’s real concern, are boiled down to easily assimilable attitudes and behavior. Bogardus devotes entire chapters to descriptions of each group that needs Americanization, and the problems and advantages attendant to their Americanization. The American Indian, for example, “met defeat in their chief attempt to adopt the ways of civilized man” and are becoming Americanized slowly (135). Bogardus writes, “They have frequently adopted the vices of the white man and become notorious for their shiftlessness” (137). Of course, the Indian has much to offer: “the gift of silence,” “his generosity,” and “the highest type of physical courage” (140, 141). Descriptions of other races and nationalities from the North European to the “Slavic Immigrant,” “Hebrew Immigrant,” and “Asiatic Immigrant” also trade heavily in stereotypes. Some of these stereotypical and racist descriptions of other races attitudes and behaviors are characterized as deleterious and need to be amended as part of a program of Americanization, such as “how Japanese immigrants in America in their business agreements have not always been trustworthy” (253). Other attitudes, on the other hand, are good for America and should be preserved in Americanization, like the Italians “love of the esthetic and beautiful” (206).

Despite the rampant stereotyping, Bogardus’s text is not simply racist, since it calls on all Americans to assimilate, imploring native-born Americans to drop the “snobbish attitude toward” the foreign born (113). Indeed, Bogardus’s plan for Americanization is also a plan for building character in existing citizens. Americanization should encourage

Americans to eliminate exploitation of the weak, to stop “[putting] money-making above all other phases of life,” to be more courteous, and to take more interest in government (117).

Bogardus’s answer to the question “what does it mean to be American” is specifically cultural. Hardly any of Bogardus’s plan for Americanization is about holding the proper political orientation towards narrowly political symbols or ceremonies. Good citizenship is a matter of having the right relationships to family, and the right relationship to the economy. When Bogardus does take up the problem of strengthening democratic belief and action, he loads it with cultural content. Bogardus’s ten corollaries of democracy are particularly revelatory:

1. The sacredness of sound family life.
2. Private gain only when in harmony with public welfare.
3. The social necessity of honest and purity in thought and action.
4. The wholesomeness of spiritual idealism and esthetic realism.
5. The superiority of quality to quantity and of thoroughness to speed.
6. The operation of justice and love between individuals.
7. The richest development possible of personalities.
8. The potential equality of races.
9. The harmfulness and hatefulness of race prejudice.
10. The subordination of the individual and the family to public needs, and of the nation to world needs. (344)

For Bogardus, being a good citizen and being a good democrat imply a whole constellation of private and political values. These values suggest a deeply Protestant conception of the American nation. Themes of honesty, faith, and self-sacrifice reflect the

character of liberal Protestantism of the time. Richard Wightman Fox's historical study of Protestantism and Progressivism uncovers the unique fusion of an emphasis on "character," which "stressed self-sacrifice and self-control as the keys to moral development" and an emphasis on "personality" which "by contrast, preached the development of a higher *self*" (1993, 647). In Bogardus's exhortations to subordinate personal desires to public goods, and his view of Americanization as a process of self-development illustrates this fusion. For example, Bogardus writes of Americanization that it "is a subjective process which the immigrant himself must experience. He must take a certain degree, or be induced to take a certain degree, of initiative himself. There is a sense in which the immigrant must Americanize himself" (314). Elsewhere, however, Bogardus writes that service is one of the American ideals to be cultivated among the native-born and immigrant alike. "Whenever a type of behavior is repeatedly performed without giving any evidence of expected personal gain of any sort," Bogardus writes, "or where a life is given for another person or for a principle, consciously or unconsciously, it may be pronounced unselfish service in a true American sense" (103). The appearance of both of these strands of thought in Bogardus's text places him squarely in the tradition of liberal Protestantism described by Fox.

Though Bogardus believes in the traditional Americanization activities described in Talbot's handbook, the process of building character comes across as a private process. American identity is one to be cultivated in private relations as well as in public life. For Bogardus, the family is the most important location for building American character. "Parental discipline," he warns, "is breaking and consideration of the wishes of elders is being ignored." The breakdown of "the sanctities of marriage and an increasing divorce

rate” are also morally calamitous. Americanization must confront these and other domestic problems. “Americanization,” he sums up, “must begin at home.”

### **C. Forming families**

The relationship between family and citizenship emerges as a central theme in many Americanization manuals. A well-formed family must begin with basic domestic conditions, such as cleanliness and an American standard of hygiene. Essays in Talbot’s Americanization handbook suggest teaching civics to women, but always after “training the mothers and children in the rules of health, sanitation, and hygiene, the principles of buying food and clothing” (209). H.H. Wheaton, a bureaucrat in the Bureau of Education describes the California legislation that mandated home visits in which this training occurred as “a most significant law” (209). Elsewhere a skeletal syllabus developed by Lizzie Rector, a New York City school principal, for a “Course of Study of the Illiterate Workers’ Class” similarly emphasizes hygiene as apparent prerequisites to a civic education (222). The course, too, suggests instruction in providing food to the family, including food choice, value, cooking and serving. Though Rector’s contribution to the handbook does not explicitly provide any examples, other pieces in the work suggest that the members of this class were taught how to prepare and serve food in the American style, rather than the style of their country of origin. In a piece originally published in *Harper’s Bazaar*, and compiled by Talbot, Olivia Howard Dunbar discusses the dietetic instruction given at home visits:

The Polish mother would shake her head with dismal scepticism at the sight of this odd, dry, uninteresting-looking food. Nevertheless she watched and wondered and learned as she was shown with how little

trouble and at what small cost this new substance could be served as a palatable and nourishing meal, sure to make pale children healthy and strong if they ate enough of it (253).

Dunbar also describes the instruction given to immigrant women on clothing and cleanliness. The essays here that discuss the Americanization of women emphasize the themes of domesticity, and family over that of civics or citizenship. Although many Progressive Americanizers likely had sympathies with the Woman Suffrage movement, the civic education that prepares women for such conventional roles might seem a bit surprising. But as historian Suzanne Marilley shows in her study *Woman Suffrage and the Origins of Liberal Feminism in the United States* (1996), the Woman Suffrage movement relied on the overarching nativist sentiment of the time to make appeals for suffrage. Gaining the support of the temperance movement, according to Marilley, “led suffragists to use nativist and racist themes that denounced the easy political inclusion of new male immigrants, supported educational qualifications for the vote, and defended southern white supremacy” (160).

The importance of hygiene and “domestic science” in the process of Americanization suggest that the first stage of Americanization was not having a basic knowledge of American history and political principles, but having a correctly ordered home. Before immigrants could become integrated into the civic nation, they must become Americanized at the level of personal practices and values. As historian John McClymer notes, “becoming an American, immigrants were taught, involved making yourself over entirely” (1982, 109). The importance of teaching hygiene is highlighted in Rector’s course of study. But it emerges more prominently in another essay by Joseph Mayper, who conducted Americanization research under the joint auspices of the Committee on Public Information

and the National Americanization Committee, a private interest group run by New York settlement worker, social worker, sociologist, and general public servant Frances Kellor.

Mayper describes the conditions that Americanization workers must remedy and recommends that they “enforce an American standard of living” (282). Nurses made daily home visits to residents of the Barren Island neighborhood of Brooklyn “and every opportunity was taken to instruct mothers in matters of cleanliness, ventilation, personal hygiene, sanitation of the home and grounds, pure food, congestion, etc” (286). This congestion, “a serious evil,” was mainly a concern related to immigrant families keeping boarders, who were often a hindrance to the maintenance of sanitary living conditions. These home visits also included “vigorous food inspections” in which “quantities of fruits, vegetables, butter, meat, fish and milk were condemned and destroyed” (287). Other strategies were to force the use of covered garbage cans by compelling the shopkeepers into “offering for sale only covered cans” (287). All of these activities were then connected with encouraging the residents to have a “closer relationship with our national life or a more intelligent understanding of our national ideals” (288). Though “decided interest was expressed” in the class, “the changing shifts in the plants hampered regularity [of attendance]” (288).

The instruction for mothers and children on health and hygiene continued uninterrupted. The emphasis on hygiene has been noted by scholars of public health as a prominent feature of the legal orientation toward immigrants. “Despite the dramatic changes in demography, the meaning of citizenship, and the ability to treat and cure acute and chronic diseases,” write Howard Markel and Alexandra Minna Stern, “foreigners were consistently associated with germs and contagion” (2002, 757). In their thorough analysis, they illustrate

that the rhetoric of public health vis-à-vis immigration contained the central premise that “immigrants threatened the health of the nation” (766). Though this premise does not explicitly appear in this handbook, it is certainly reflected in the prominent place given health and hygiene education in the processes of Americanization and citizenship education.

The extent to which families were monitored and ordered according to the Americanizers’ beliefs suggests that one’s family life had a direct effect on the national life. Indeed, Peter Roberts’s handbook for industrial Americanization workers frequently conflates the family and the nation. Roberts, a leader of the Y.M.C.A, published a handbook in 1920 intended for Americanization directors working within industry that describes the techniques, methods, and content of Americanization work. These Americanization directors were charged by the company with teaching the workforce English, and providing entertainment and recreation. The real work of the Americanization director, he writes, is to “prepare the foreign born for the duties and obligations of citizenship,” a process that is described as “preparing aliens to take their place in the family” (Roberts 1920, 66). His description of domestic politics, and the inherent democracy thereof, is referred to as “home affairs” (20). Americanization, for Roberts, is a process of readying immigrants for their role in the American family, and ensuring that they know how the metaphorical home operates.

But Roberts is interested in ordering the home in a less metaphorical sense. Roberts praises new immigrants for their virtues: “they are thrifty and saving; they cling to the simple life; the foreign-born wife is the breadmaker as well as its distributor” (137). Roberts goes on: “When we consider, however, the character of the home and its furnishings, the care of the children, sleeping quarters, the comforts and conveniences the family ought to enjoy, — the foreign-born are far removed from American standards” (137). One of the major

problems of the immigrant home is that “they simply buy bare necessities and no comforts” (138). The Americanization program should “give these people an insight into the home of the American workingmen, with its comforts and conveniences, its furnishings and draperies, and its pride in the maintenance of standards which mean family respect, decency, and solidarity” (138). Roberts here is talking explicitly about the immediate family in the immigrant home, but he is also talking about the full assimilation into the larger American family. Indeed, what effects the family effects civilization, including the family’s consumptive practices. A “wiser expenditure of money” works toward “the good of the family and civilization” (138).

Roberts does not, however, explicitly describe the proper family dynamics, or the roles of each member of the family. Other Americanization sources give a more comprehensive view of the proper places of each member of the family, and their relationship to citizenship. *Loyal Citizenship* (1922), a citizenship textbook written by Thomas Harrison Reed, a lawyer and professor of municipal government, is directed at younger Americans, presumably both foreign- and native-born. Rather than part of a workplace program, or civic group’s citizenship course, Reed’s textbook is meant for inclusion in the public schools. As such, Reed relies less on documentary sources like Talbot’s handbook, and speaks past the Americanization worker, directly to young current and would-be citizens. It is, given its audience, the most didactic; and in it the themes that were sometimes indirectly hinted at, or placed in the background, are overtly expressed and made central to the concept of citizenship. Where Roberts talked about family unity and loyalty vaguely and without explicit reference to individual roles within the family, Reed devotes an entire lesson to describing the family and its relation to citizenship



Reed's lesson begins by asserting that "*family was one of the first associations that existed among human beings, and it remains the most important one into which they enter*" (Reed 1922, 1, emphasis in original). This family consists of a father who "earns the living in shop or office or on the farm," a mother who "manages the house, cooks or sees to the cooking, and cares for the young children," and children who "help here and there with errands, chores, or small earnings" (2). Larger kinship networks that might characterize immigrant families, or other imaginings of the family are excluded. Family is the first form of government and it is a government that demands absolute obedience to parental authority. "Children sometimes require *force* or the fear of it," Reed writes, "to make them obedient to even the best rules" (3). The use of force "*is necessary to make government and law effective*" (3). Obedience, in fact, is the first step toward good citizenship. Good citizenship in the family sphere radiates into the spheres of community, state, nation, and world. Here, Reed echoes Bogardus's admonition that Americanization must begin at home.

But unlike Bogardus and Roberts, Reed gives us an image of the home life of good citizens. As part of the lesson on good familial citizenship, pupils are to practice civic activities in the home. These civic activities include separate suggestions for boys and girls. Boys, Reed suggests, should "make a useful device for the home," "make a set of practical playthings for a child three years old," "cut and rake the grass," or "chop a quantity of kindling wood and pile it neatly in its proper place" (5). Girls, on the other hand, should "clean the ice chest thoroughly twice a week for two weeks," "put away clothing, rugs, furs, or blankets for a season," "cook the dinner for the family so as to give your mother a rest," or "take care of the baby or amuse the younger children on rainy days" (5-6). Though Reed asserts that "*absolute authority of the father over his children gave place to a milder rule*" of

obedience to both parents equally, the vision of family life he proffers is clearly a patriarchal one. Women's "civic activities" are centered within the home, while boys are encouraged to practice good citizenship outside of the confines of the house.

#### **D. Constructing Workers**

Americanization formed families as workshops of citizenship. But many Americanizers were also concerned with the relationship between citizenship and work. According to Peter Roberts citizenship is a constellation of family life, public life, and work life. "Good citizenship," writes Roberts,

is made up of many parts. As the body comprises many members each of which must be healthy and functioning aright before a perfect organism is realized, so the citizen, having many duties must discharge each aright before good citizenship is realized in the state. Every citizen has duties to the home as husband and father, duties to the community as member, duties to the industries as a producer. These several spheres have a vital relation to good citizenship (222).

Yet for Roberts, productivity is the key. "The American way," he observes, "is to give good pay to men who earn it" (132). Affluence helps order the family, and provide solidarity, but it can only be obtained through hard work. Immigrants, for example, must be taught that Americanism includes the possibility "to begin the year a pauper and end it a millionaire" (132). But importantly, Americanization directors need to discourage erroneous thinking about this possibility. "The error," Roberts writes, "is that immigrants believe that luck and not hard work is at the root of these

achievements in America. Whoever rises to affluence nearly always does so by hard work.

Given Roberts's audience, the emphasis on hard work is not entirely surprising. Moreover, Roberts's ideas of Americanization were also heavily shaped by the larger YMCA education effort, which some of the leadership viewed, according to historian Paul McBride as a process "to root out radicalism of any kind except an uncritical love of country" (1977, 155). Roberts's text expresses similar antipathy toward radicalism. In the passage above, as throughout the text, Roberts conceives of citizenship as a set of duties, or obligations—a status that confers responsibility and deference, rather than activating rights and independence. Moreover, the moral requisites of Americanization are "the virtues of duty and obedience, service and honor, truth and uprightness" (239). "Another evil" which Americanization can help cleanse from the family is "mob rule" (240). By "mob rule," Roberts means "the steel strike in Gary, Youngstown, Johnstown, and other centers" and "the industrial conflicts on the Pacific Coast as well as in the mining regions of West Virginia and Pennsylvania" (240). Americanization, then, is a bulwark against organization and cultivates a stance of obedience and deference to authorities.

Roberts's method of English instruction in the workplace similarly cultivates an obedient stance. Rather than worry about the logistics of teaching a linguistically diverse group of immigrants, Roberts encourages the "direct method," whereby the teacher conducts all instruction in English. "Better progress will be made," Roberts asserts, "if the teacher

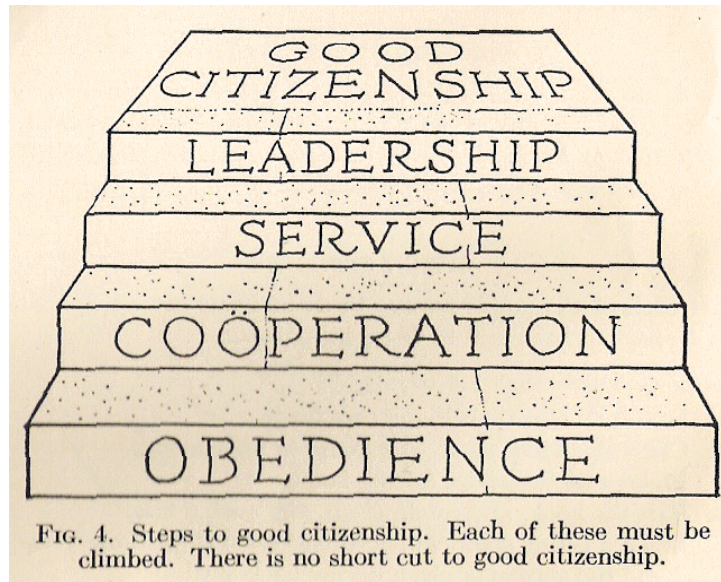


Figure 1: This image from Reed's *Loyal Citizenship* shows the path to good citizenship (Thomas Harrison Reed, *Loyal Citizenship*. (Yonkers-on-Hudson, NY: World Book Company, 1922), p. 6.)

knows nothing of the tongue of the men he teaches" (105). The dynamic in such an Americanization class empowers the teacher by putting the immigrant "under pressure to understand the teacher when he speaks" (105). Indeed, allegiance to the teacher is part of Roberts's goal: "[the teacher] is the personification of America to them, and they will love America as they love him" (107). The teacher is also in reality, not just in metaphor, the embodiment of workplace authority.

In Reed's textbook as well, obedience and hard work are crucial ingredients of good citizenship. Reed ties loyal citizenship to one's work habits. In no uncertain terms, Reed's text emphasizes that in America, "*Everyone should work at least enough to pay his own way*" (14). But this point is not italicized to emphasize the value of independence or self-sufficiency; rather, citizens must work because those who do not work "whether rich or poor—are all dead weights to be carried by the rest of us" (14). Their great civic failure is that "they do not cooperate" (14). In the lesson on family, Reed invoked the spirit of

cooperation to encourage obedience to parental authority rather than to suggest some co-determined, democratic home life. When he discusses cooperation with regard to work, he means essentially the same thing. Workers must understand that the division of occupations is really a matter of cooperation. “It is perhaps difficult to realize,” writes Reed, “that the chief of a great corporation is working, as he sits behind a big, clean desk for a few hours a day dictating letters and receiving callers” (20). But those who direct capital are “working hard and effectively indeed” (20). By cooperation, Reed understands that “*labor and capital are really partners in production, one being as necessary as the other*” (26). Although the partnership results in profits for capital, and wages for labor, good citizens understand “that [capital] must have the prospect of unusual reward—profit” because “the hope of getting back all that he invested plus interest will not induce a man to put his savings into an uncertain enterprise” (29). The capitalist does his part by the work of investing and directing, just as the laborer does his part by sawing a cord of wood.

In a previous section, readers are reminded that “it frequently happens that we are called on to obey laws that we did not wish to have passed, and we obey them. ...It is only through doing our *duty* as citizens—obeying lawful authority—that we can cooperate to maintain the *privileges* of citizenship” (12). This injunction (warning?) holds as true in the workplace as it does the home. Reed opens a section titled “Some Problems of Larger Citizenship” with the “Problems of Labor” (241). One of the most dreadful problems of labor, to Reed, is the “*industrial unions*” which “are much more radical than the trades unions” (242). Reed warns of a more radical union “which proposes to organize all *workers* in ‘one big union.’ Its object is the overthrow of our government and social order by a general strike or other violent means” (242). The fear of strikes here mirrors Roberts’s

Americanization handbook. Moreover, though, it represents what Horace Kallen calls “the rising and unexhausted tide of propaganda-drunk, war-like emotion unexpectedly deprived of its object” by the armistice that ended World War I, and “its projection upon the ‘reds’ in place of the Germans” (Kallen 1998, 128). Disputes that might arise between unions and bosses “*cannot be solved by insistence on rights*” according to Reed; “it can only be worked out in a spirit of cooperation for the common good” (244). “Cooperation” for Reed is closely tied to obedience, suggesting that labor should defer to the decisions of capital.

Indeed, deference and obedience comprise the whole of one’s duties as citizens according to Reed. “We can sum up all of the citizens’s duties,” he says, “in the one word *loyalty*” (74). Detached from any object, “loyalty,” like “cooperation,” actually stands in for obedience. The definition of citizenship that emerges in these texts represents a remarkable shift from Tocquevillian conceptions of citizenship. Throughout the nineteenth century, historian Julie Reuben writes, American writers operated under the “assumption that citizenship entailed political activism” (1997, 399). By contrast, the view of citizenship that emerges in these twentieth century documents is primarily one of deference rather than action; citizens are encouraged to vote and to understand the work of government in all of the texts surveyed above, but those aims are clearly subordinate to cultivating personal character, sound family life, and good work habits. As Reuben conclude, citizenship education in this period reflects “themes of cooperation and community over politics and government” (1997, 399).

But what explains this shift? Reuben suggests that the new citizenship of this era was part of the expansion of state capacity. “Social scientists” who published citizenship education materials “believed that citizenship education needed to take into consideration the

complexity of modern society” (416). Individuals by themselves were unequipped to handle the new complexity; the government, on the other hand, could, with frequent intervention, manage it. The style of citizenship education that emerges as a result of the expansion in state capacity “encouraged students to look to government to provide services, and, in return the students should fulfill their duty as citizens by cooperating with government programs through their private activities” (420).

While Reuben’s explanation captures an important truth, her analysis does not fully consider how other expressions of this new civics were implicated in economic and religious concerns. There is certainly an aspect of the texts surveyed above that suggests what Rogers Smith neatly sums up as “efforts to herd people into big, efficient organizations scientifically managed by strong leaders” (Smith 1997, 420). As Smith indicates, “the Progressive years were a time in which not only was much constitutional law recast in more firmly pro-business modes, but also certain strands of progressivism contributed to that pattern” (424). Both Roberts and Reed illustrate the connection between the new citizenship and the pro-business orientation of Progressivism.

Another important strand of Progressive thought that provides an important distinction between Bogardus’s text and those of Roberts, Reed, and to a certain extent Talbot. Bogardus’s Protestantism clearly shapes his conception of citizenship, as it did for many other Progressives. The emphasis on self-sacrifice and self-development that define the liberal Protestantism of the Progressive period also support the new citizenship. Self-sacrifice in the service of the common good, one of the highest values of citizenship in Bogardus’s text, supports a view of citizenship that, on Reuben’s account, relates to government as an institution with “the right and obligation to limit individual freedom in

order to protect the needs of society” (419). But the liberal Protestant focus on self-development also reinforces the notion that “upright behavior, not political participation, [is] the defining mark of good citizenship” (Reuben 416).

The view of citizenship that emerges from these texts is a direct outgrowth of the Progressive reformers views of the economy, the state, and the self. While some reformers cited approvingly in Talbot’s handbook clearly represent the view of the managerial state which implicates itself into everyday life, defining routines of hygiene and cleanliness, others central concerns lay elsewhere. Bogardus, for example, is much more concerned with the process by which Americanization nationalizes the Protestant self, with its attendant demands of sacrifice. Reed and Roberts represent the view that citizenship should be made to serve the expansion of the national economy, and their texts reflect that through an emphasis on obedience and productive work habits. In one way or another, all of the Progressive writers generate a view of American citizenship that strays far from the ideal of civic nationalism.



### **Chapter 3: Citizenship education after World War II**

The civic nation orthodoxy, like the Tocquevillian thesis from which it arises, would likely regard this definition of citizenship, like the melting pot metaphor, as an aberration, an obviously bygone and inferior stage of development from which the civic nation has emerged triumphant. This characterization, however, effaces the continuity between the “Americanization” period and future citizenship education efforts. During World War II, the federal government began a vigorous program of citizenship education administered by the Department of Justice. The citizenship textbooks that emerge from this program offer a somewhat different picture of citizenship. The definition of citizenship that emerges during the Progressive period remains unchanged in a few key respects. Although the explicitly Protestant themes of character development largely fall away, citizenship education continues to blur the lines between public and private identities, emphasizing obedient work habits and conventional gender roles. The *Federal Textbook on Citizenship* in this period is also notable for the themes it does not emphasize, namely consumption and anti-communism.

Surprisingly, too, the most nationalistic organizations of the period construct citizenship education manuals that most resemble the sorts of descriptions of the nation and citizenship that civic nationalism presupposes; close analysis reveals that these manuals, too, present a very culturally specific nation. The Daughters of the American Revolution, who pioneered Americanization activities in the late nineteenth century, continued releasing their citizenship education materials into the post-World War II era. Their citizenship manuals are

laced with themes of Anglo-Saxon superiority, and the equation of consumption and freedom. The 1945 edition of the *DAR Manual for Citizenship* (Buel and Daughters of the American Revolution, 1945) begins with a racialized history of freedom. “Hundreds of years ago,” it begins, “there lived in the forests of northern Europe a people called Teutons” (11). The Teutons “elected their chiefs by voting by voice” (11). After tribes of the Teutons moved to England, and established the Magna Carta and Petition of rights, people started “slowly going to America at the cost of great hardship and sacrifice in order to escape from persecution” (11). Those colonists kept alive the flame of freedom, eventually securing it through a revolution that “was fought to MAINTAIN the liberties of the colonists” and “to PRESERVE the principles of the colonial governments” (15). It was, importantly, not a radical revolution: “Americans abhor the kind of revolution which destroys and overturns, which murders, loots, and burns” (15).

Despite the obvious emphasis on the racial origins of the idea of freedom, and the emphatic reminder that the American revolution was really one of conservation rather than innovation, much of the manual focuses on civic content. The manual reproduces and explicates the symbols and documents of American government—the flag, the seal, the pledge, and the Bill of Rights. It describes, in personalistic terms, what the Constitution means to citizens: it “allows you a voice in the government through the officials whom you help elect,” “permits you to petition the government to right your wrongs,” “prevents you from being held to answer to a complaint unless you have been lawfully accused,” and “secures your home from search except by lawful warrant” (35-36).

A few pages later, when addressing the applicant for citizenship, readers are admonished to “make your home a true American home” in which “parents and children love

each other. Where truth, honor, love of God and love of country are taught the children from babyhood” (38). Finally, applicants should remember “You are not an Italian-American. You are not a Spanish-American. You are not a German-American, nor any other kind of hyphenated American. YOU ARE AN AMERICAN” (39). The reference to “hyphenated Americans” clearly hearkens back to the earlier Americanization efforts of the World War I era, and fears of immigrants’ divided loyalty.

Given the apparent fear of the divided loyalty of immigrants, one might expect long warnings about the dangers of communism, but such explicit warnings are scarce. There is only a short essay devoted to the defense of capitalism against the other un-American “isms”: “Communism, Socialism, Fascism, Naziism” (45). According to the DAR, Capitalism offers more freedom than the others, and therefore “they [the first American settlers] chose capitalism as the economic system under which to earn a livelihood, because they knew that this system could give them the freedom they desired” (50). The “freedom they desired” is primarily property rights. Communism does not provide for freedom because “history shows that the people become slaves of the government whenever their property rights are taken from them” (48). Communists “take away ownership and give it to the state” (48). The capitalist system of the United States, on the other hand, is defined by “private ownership of property and the right of the owner to decide what he shall produce” (46). “Except during war emergencies,” the manual states, “business in the United States is free to go forward under private ownership” (46). One of the main benefits of private ownership and operation of business is the high level of material comfort:

At the outset of the war, two out of every nine Americans owned an automobile, while the four next leading countries averaged one car

for each 32 persons. The mechanical refrigerator, the radio, and many household appliances scarcely known in other lands, have long been considered necessities by the majority of families in this country (46).

Freedom can be measured in levels of consumption, and means “happiness and prosperity” according to the manual (50).

If one’s measure of freedom is consumption, then Americans were a free people indeed during this time. Lizabeth Cohen, in her political history of consumption, *Consumer’s Republic*, writes that a “new postwar ideal of the purchaser or citizen who simultaneously fulfilled personal desire and civic obligation by consuming” emerged in the postwar period (2003, 120). The ideal of thrift, impressed upon immigrants in the interwar period, was replaced with the ideal of consumption. After 1945, “one found a vision of postwar America where the general good would be best served not by frugality or even moderation, but by individuals pursuing personal wants in a flourishing mass consumption marketplace” (121). The links between consumptive practices and freedom was not limited to nationalist citizenship education manuals like the DAR’s manual; these themes were ubiquitous across popular culture.

The civic education manual published by the American Legion expresses similar themes. Like the DAR manual, the American Legion’s citizenship education program features more civic content, and features it more centrally than do the Americanization handbooks. Interestingly, the more stridently nationalist citizenship education pamphlet from the American Legion, *Know Your America* (1944), presents a more civic brand of nationality than do similar documents produced by the federal government. The front matter of the American Legion’s manual juxtaposes a German military oath and the oath of enlistment in

the U.S. Army respectively headlined “German...for a man!” and “American...for an idea!”

(2). Nearly half of this slim but pithy pamphlet covers the flag, the documents of founding, and short presidential details. Most all of these excerpts reinforce the idea of the civic nation, suggesting that it is shared belief in principles, not shared culture that qualifies one for citizenship. The course in citizenship contained within, however, reiterates the importance of “good moral character” (37). And the idea of “Good Citizenship” includes cooperation with the Health Department and keeping a clean yard, recalling the earlier manuals emphasis on cleanliness (39). But it also interestingly carries the assumption that citizens have yards to keep clean, suggesting home ownership and suburban living. The emphasis on home ownership is not surprising given that, according to Cohen, “new house construction provided the bedrock of the postwar mass consumption economy” (122). Home ownership rapidly exploded, encouraged through a raft of government assistance “as part of the package of Veterans Administration (VA) benefits funded by the GI Bill” or “through mortgage insurance to lenders and developers through the Federal Housing Administration (FHA)” (122).

While the earlier Americanization handbooks showed some concern for immigrant living conditions, they did not go so far as to link citizenship and home ownership. Additionally, the home whose yard a good citizen keeps clean is the domain of women. In discussion of women’s literacy education, the pamphlet emphasizes that “homecraft...should be given much attention. It should include the care of children, proper diet, proper clothing, labor-saving devices, and first-aid” (40). What constitutes a proper diet, or proper clothing is not elaborated in the handbook, but previous handbooks emphasized a basically American diet. The subtle emphasis on labor saving devices reflects the consumerist themes of the

time. Durable goods, such as refrigerators, washing machines, and other appliances experience a booming market during this time. “Most remarkable,” Cohen reports, “was the jump in American families owning a mechanical refrigerator: from 44 to 80 percent between 1940 and 1950” (123).

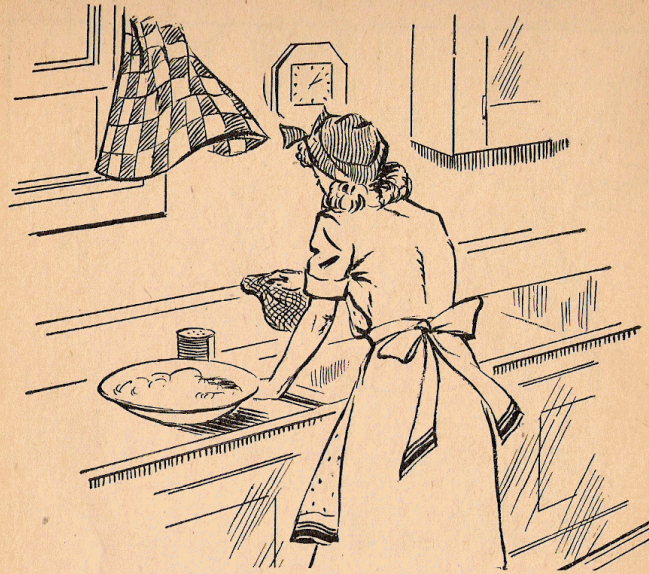
The themes of obedience present in the Americanization handbooks also appears in *Know Your America*. “Obedience to rightfully constituted authority” should be taught to “foreign born illiterates” (40). To emphasize obedience, the American Legion recommends using a YMCA citizenship course, and following the direct method of instruction that Roberts pioneered. Also interesting is the instructions to stress thrift as well as obedience. As Cohen suggests, the middle class popular culture of the time primarily stressed the connection between the public good and private consumption; the manuals for immigrants, on the other hand seem to be stressing more clearly the values of thrift that were dominant prior to World War II.

The *Federal Textbook on Citizenship* emphasizes thrift even more forcefully. *The Gardners Become Citizens* (1943, 1955) an advanced literacy supplement instruction in English; unlike some other literacy supplements, this handbook is written in paragraphs, and the story’s narrative features multiple events and concepts. It also deals more exclusively with the process of naturalization and legal citizenship. *The Gardners* opens with a fictional immigrant everyman, John Gardner (a strangely Anglicized name for an immigrant), and his attempt to bring his parents to America. The story begins with the value of thrift: “John saves a little money each week. Part of it is for his father and mother. Part of it is for a house. It is not easy to save money” (1). A caption to a picture of John Gardner either collecting or depositing his pay reads: “JOHN WORKS HARD AND SAVES HIS MONEY”

(1). *The Teacher's Edition* (1943) to *The Gardners Become Citizens* offers lesson plans, points to emphasize, and classroom activities to help the adult students learn the language. For this first chapter on saving money, the manual instructs teachers to guide students through a short written response to the question, "What are some of the ways that we save money" (3)? In this volume of the book, the primary subject is naturalization and citizenship. Even still, the first lessons on the route to citizenship are hard work and thrift, linking these two themes to citizenship.

Literacy readers like *The Day Family* (Bowman 1944; 1953), contain a less subtle account of the economic themes of American citizenship. This literacy supplement is clearly intended for beginning English students. It consists of the short declarative sentences customary of children's books (From the first page: "I go. I work. I go to work"). Rather than being directly about what makes a good citizen, the book is designed to teach the vocabulary that an immigrant desiring citizenship might need. The text intermixes scenes of daily life in a larger narrative of acquiring citizenship. *The Day Family* tells the story of Mr. Day, the all-American factory worker who works hard in a factory, quits at five, goes straight home to his loving wife has prepared dinner. Mr. Day "works hard in the factory. He works for his family" (10). Mrs. Day, on the other hand, "works in the home" (12). She "plans the work for the day," "cleans her house" (because "a family needs a clean home"), and will later "buy food for the family" (15, 16, 17). Mrs. Day also practices thrift by making clothes for her family. Throughout her busy workday, Mrs. Day has contributed to this domestic economy entirely willingly—she "wants" to do all these things, just as Mr. Day wants to work: "Mrs. Day wants to buy food for the family," "Mrs. Day wants her family to have

## THE NEEDS OF THE FAMILY



Mrs. Day cleans her house.

A family needs a clean home.

Mrs. Day will go to the store.

She walks to the store.

She will buy good vegetables.

She will buy good fruit.

The family needs good fruit and vegetables.

cleans

house

vegetables

store

buy

fruit

Figure 2: Mrs. Day's duties are contained to the house. (Ann Bowman, "The Day Family: a literacy reader (Book 1)." (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1944), p. 16.)

good health" "She wants to save money," "She wants to make clothes for her family" (17, 20).

The image of women working exclusively in the home represents a shift from wartime, when women took skilled industrial jobs during the war. But the end of the war



meant a series of political and social defeats for women. In the first place, women who took those jobs lost them when the GIs returned to America. Women who were politically activated as consumer citizens during the war, mobilizing for price controls, “found themselves marginalized from public life,” according to Cohen (135). A battle over the fate of price controls in 1946, which were eventually phased out over the demands of women, firmly cemented a reconversion to the gender roles modeled by the Day family. Importantly, not all American women “wanted” to do the sorts of things that Mrs. Day does.

As the story progresses, readers are introduced to Mr. Day’s mustachioed coworker Mr. Kip. Mr. Kip wants to become a citizen like Mr. Day. Sadly, Mr. Kip has few friends, and Mr. Day must help him. Mr. Day teaches Mr. Kip to read traffic lights, warning signs at the work place, and the signs for entrances and exits. But Mr. Day also provides more assistance, above and beyond reading signs and traffic lights. Mr. Day invites Mr. Kip to dinner, and later proposes that Mr. Kip come live with their family. Mr. Kip accepts the offer. Mr. Kip’s passage to citizenship is inextricably linked to the traditional family. Indeed, going to live with the Day family, represents the first step towards citizenship for Mr. Kip. By living with the Day family, Kip becomes normalized to the family structure in the Day household, and presumably learns to be the same sort of Americans that the Days are, hard working and thrifty.

Given the climate of consumption in the postwar period, the emphasis on thrift is certainly an interesting and unexpected theme in these handbooks. However, as Cohen points out, “the integration of working-class Americans into a mass middle class...did not necessarily reflect the reality of working-class life” (156). Indeed, despite widespread images of the contrary, not everyone in America could practice the appropriate levels of

consumption, and new immigrants were likely to be among those who could not. To the extent that citizenship in the postwar period was connected to one's status as a consumer, immigrants are largely hailed as second-class citizens by these handbooks.

Moreover, Mrs. Day's role in the story is quite interesting. In the first volume, Mr. Kip and Mr. Day are the only speaking characters. Mrs. Day says only "Welcome" to Mr. Kip and Mr. Day. Mr. Day tells Mr. Kip that "We do not have a sign at our home to say WELCOME" and that "Mrs. Day is the sign" (29). She is, quite literally, the welcome mat. In "Book 2," Mrs. Day has a more prominent role. She invites Mr. Kip to stay for dinner, to join their household, and encourages him in his desire to acquire citizenship. "We like you to say you want to be a citizen" Mrs. Day tells him. "We welcome you this time to our home and to our country" (6). Interestingly, Mrs. Day all but disappears from the story once Mr. Kip begins the formal citizenship education process. All of the substantive knowledge about the rights and duties of citizens is conveyed through Mr. Day. Mrs. Day's last words are a request for Mr. Kip to join her and Mr. Day while they vote. She wants Mr. Kip to "see that we are free to vote the way we like" (32).

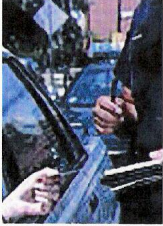
Though these sources include the sort of concepts and principles one associates with civic nationalism and liberal citizenship, the prevailing emphasis is on private values and behaviors in this period. The change in citizenship ushered in by the Progressives continued and deepened. In these manuals, as in those produced in the Progressive era, the family is again the first stage of citizenship. Here though, citizenship and conventional gender roles are more explicitly connected. The economic content, in which citizenship is linked to thrift (and to a lesser extent consumption) also constructs a notion of citizenship that describes a private identity.

## **Chapter 4: Impressions of post-9/11 nationality**

The difference between the Americanization period and the post-World War II period is striking in some ways, but other differences seem slight. So, too when looking at some visions of post-9/11 nationality. The 2004 “Guide to Naturalization” published by the Department of Homeland Security, echoes some familiar themes. Part of the naturalization requirements is to show that one is of “Good Moral Character.” But the guide defines “Good Moral Character” very nebulously. Rather than defined positively, it is defined by what shows lack of good moral character. “Any crime against a person with intent to harm,” “habitual drunkenness or drunk driving,” “polygamy,” “illegal gambling,” or “terrorist acts” all disqualify one from citizenship on the basis of showing poor moral character. Incidentally, so does “persecution of anyone because of race, religion, national origin, political opinion or social group” (25). Nevertheless these sorts of things are merely “EXAMPLES” and are not presumably an exhaustive list. In many ways, the designation seems somewhat at the discretion of the Citizenship and Immigration Service. Besides committing aggravated felonies, the companion pamphlet “Welcome to the United States,” informs immigrants that they “also may be denied citizenship if you behave in other ways that show lack of good moral character” (98). This vague and undefined category could comprise any number of behaviors.

But, as with the citizenship textbooks in the 1940s, the most prescriptive material is in the literacy education. The sample sentences for the written English test of citizenship sound

**BEHAVIORS THAT MIGHT SHOW A LACK OF GOOD MORAL CHARACTER**



- Drunk driving or being drunk most of the time.
- Illegal gambling.
- Prostitution.
- Lying to gain immigration benefits.
- Failing to pay court-ordered child support.
- Committing terrorist acts.
- Persecuting someone because of race, religion, national origin, political opinion, or social group.

Figure 3: “Good moral character” is a requirement for naturalization. (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Citizenship and Immigration Service, *Welcome to America: A Guide for New Immigrants*. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2005), p. 97.)

surprisingly similar to sentences in *The Day Family*. For example, “He wanted to find a job,” “She cooks for her friends,” “She was happy with her house,” “The man wanted to get a job,” “They buy many things at the store,” “We have a very clean house,” “You work very hard at your job,” “You drink too much coffee” (7). The female pronouns in these sentences is always associated with conventional gender roles. “She” does want to find a job, “she needs to buy some new clothes.” Indeed, these sample sentences reflect the same gender roles illustrated in *The Day Family*. Like Mrs. Day, “his wife is at work in the kitchen.”

Consumption is also a prominent theme in this literacy supplement. Products abound, and the subjects of the sentences are either purchasing them, or desiring them: “The children wanted a television,” “She needs to buy some new clothes,” “They are very happy with their car,” “They buy many things at the store,” “They live together in a big house,” “Warm clothing was on sale in the store.” “They” do not save their money, but they do “work very hard,” presumably so they can spend more money. The value of thrift, which showed some signs of waning in the post World War II period, has disappeared from twenty-first century

citizenship education materials. Unlike in *The Day Family*, there are no admonitions to save money.

But the contemporary guides to citizenship are not simply an updated form of *The Day Family*. The “Welcome to the United States” guide, a 2005 publication of the Department of Homeland Security leads recent immigrants through life in the United States. In this document, there are very few prescriptive statements about the character of citizenship. The section entitled “Getting Settled in the United States” reminds readers that “owning a home is part of the ‘American Dream’” (24). The guide for new immigrants also advises them of their rights to nondiscrimination in housing. The rest of this section describes the various things that immigrants should do to take care of their money: it should be kept in a bank, and they should keep up with their credit. These descriptions provide basic banking skills: the difference between an ATM card and a debit card, what checks are, and how to keep a good credit score. Later sections provide similarly basic descriptions of education, healthcare and childcare services. There are no explicit connections between these activities and services and the practice of citizenship.

When the manual does describe citizens, it describes their role as “[shaping] their government and its policies” (74). This role entails the responsibility to be informed. Citizens shape their government and its policies by voting “to choose important government officials, such as the President, Vice President, Senators, and Representatives” (74). Moreover, citizens also have the right to “call their elected officials to express an opinion, ask for information, or get help with specific issues” (74). This view of citizenship presents a remarkably limited range of citizenship activities. In this text, citizens simply vote for important representatives. When political freedoms are discussed in a short explanation of

the Bill of Rights, these freedoms are not associated with the practices or benefits of citizenship. The pamphlet instead devotes more time to describing the various powers of different branches of government. But even those discussions are terse. Indeed, the lack of citizenship education content in the guide is remarkable.

The advantages of acquiring legal citizenship, as described in this document, are primarily individualistic and economic. The answers to the question “Why Become a U.S. Citizen?” are benefits such as becoming available for federal jobs, becoming eligible for federal grants and scholarships, and obtaining government benefits. Citizens can also travel with a passport, serve on a jury, and vote. With the exception of serving on a jury, which is “an important responsibility” all of the other benefits describe citizenship as a means to pursue individual self-interest (90-91).

In the documents produced to educate immigrants in the post-9/11 era, liberal citizenship is remarkably thin. There are fairly robust cultural presuppositions that appear to underlie the idea of citizenship. The insistence on having good moral character suggests conformity to American ideas of morality. Gendered concepts of citizenship also remain and form a thread of continuity between these three periods. Yet what is most remarkable is the relative lack of content that might fit under Winthrop Talbot’s umbrella of “Americanism.” It is not simply that the civic content is overshadowed or based upon the cultural presuppositions; rather, the civic content is sparse and, when it does appear, elementary. The idea of citizenship presented here is not that which is typically associated with civic nationalism. In fact, the concept of citizenship itself appears hollow in these documents, more a matter of behavior than belief.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

On its face, linking citizenship to private identity does not necessarily preclude civic nationality. The content of citizenship education materials, however, illustrates that American nationality means significantly more than adherence to a set of universal political principles. To call American nationality “civic” seems to mischaracterize it. And yet American nationality is not necessarily an ethnic. Indeed, the process of Americanization suggests forsaking all ethnicity. But it would be a mistake to suggest that the relative lack of ethnic cues means some kind of “civic” nationality, as if there were not culturally specific values and behaviors that ease one’s membership. What the documents analyzed here point toward is the failure of the civic/ethnic dichotomy to accurately capture American nationality.

In the late Progressive period, the process of Americanization reflected the overwhelmingly Protestant character of Progressive reformers. Self-control in the name of the public good is an important theme that runs through many of the Americanization manuals. In addition, the manuals also reflect the Progressive’s belief in the possibilities of remaking American society through managerial administration. But above all, the theme that sticks out among all of these, and seems to be the most profound change in the idea of citizenship, is the emphasis on obedience. Citizens are not active participants in public life, they are obedient subjects of the rightful authorities—parents, teachers, bosses, and public

servants. One might chalk this up to the heightened national solidarity surround World War I, but its effects are longer lasting.

Rather than a rote rehearsal of the themes of the late Progressive period, citizenship education in the 1940s was an extension of this process that reflects the particular economic circumstances of that postwar period. Good citizenship is linked to values that are only accessible to those living with a certain level of economic security. Having a yard to keep clean, a component of the American Legion's definition of good citizenship, suggests suburban living; the DAR, who extol the freedom to consume secured by capitalism, also seem to link full citizenship with freedom and the ownership of consumer goods like cars, and appliances. But, the federal citizenship education efforts emphasized a different aspect of suburban living. The images of good citizenship presented in those manuals reflect notions of gender that define the home as the woman's sphere, and the public as the man's sphere. In either case, the duties of the citizen are to work and save money, or to spend money wisely. Interestingly, in this period, the idea that one might be participating in the public good has fallen away. In the Americanization literature, citizens were supposed to change their habits and behaviors to help realize a common life and the public good; in the post World War II period, there is no discussion of the public good. Citizens simply behave this way because economic self-interest defines citizenship; citizenship is detached from any notion of the public good.

Looking across the history of citizenship education, the most striking thread of commonality is the way in which citizenship defines a private identity. Although most of the rights and duties typically associated with citizenship—jury duty, paying taxes, voting—are activities that are conducted in the public sphere, much of the future citizen's education is



about private behavior. Citizens keep clean homes, their homes are the domain of women, and they work hard. These are not incidental, but central to the concept of American citizenship and nationality. It is interesting to note that those documents which are most didactic (Reed's *Loyal Citizenship*, and *The Day Family*) are the two texts which place the family and hard work in the foreground, while other texts hold these as background assumptions. The centrality of these themes to those citizenship manuals which seem to be doing the most formative work of citizenship education suggests that they are among the most important components of citizenship.

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